

Company Vacuums Up Exports

Hong Kong Commercial Service Helps Firm Enter China

By the U.S. Commercial Service, Hong Kong

Paul Fuhrmann has always been good at marketing products, and now he's even vacuuming up export markets. His most recent accomplishment? Through the help of the U.S. Commercial Service in Hong Kong, Fuhrmann's employer, an Illinois-based manufacturer of vacuum waste systems, has entered the Chinese market with projected sales of \$50 million over the next 20 years.

Fuhrmann, as director of Asia-Pacific development for Evac Environmental Solutions, or Evac, markets the firm's vacuum waste systems, which are used in restrooms in airplanes, trains, ships, and buildings.

"Vacuum technology, first used in aircraft in the mid-1980s, revolutionized the

way wastewater is transferred, being much superior to the older systems, which essentially reused the same untreated water," says Fuhrmann. "Vacuum technology is much more hygienic and efficient, and makes for a much more pleasant travel experience while reducing odor, fresh water usage, and operating costs."

How does vacuum technology work? In older aircraft toilet systems, gravity is needed to flush the toilet. As such, the holding tank must be located right below the toilet, and the same untreated water is reused with just a blue-colored deodorant added. In vacuum waste systems, no gravity is needed, so the waste is actually sucked out to a separate holding tank located elsewhere in the aircraft, and fresh water replenishes the toilet after each use. And if you are on a long flight, well, let's just say the newer technology is very much appreciated.

Evac, with 100 employees in Rockford, Ill., and 250 worldwide, has been designing and manufacturing vacuum waste systems for commercial aircraft and business jets since 1987. All new Boeing commercial aircraft use Evac toilets.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

Evac's efforts to do business in China began in November 2001, when Fuhrmann contacted the Commercial Service in Hong Kong for assistance. At the time, the company was looking for aviation trading companies and end users in Hong Kong and mainland China.

Picking up the phone, the Commercial Service staff in Hong Kong established close contact with local companies and quickly identified several appropriate potential partners for Evac. Among them was V-Mark, a leading Hong Kong aviation trading company.





“We found that V-Mark had the perfect profile and record to partner with Evac,” says Elanna Tam, of the Commercial Service, who made the match. “In a short time, V-Mark was promoting Evac’s system to Shenzhen Airlines, a China-based airline, with good results.”

In April 2003, Shenzhen Airlines specified Evac’s system for its purchase of 10 Boeing 737-900 aircraft, and soon thereafter, V-Mark promoted Evac’s products to AVIC I Commercial Aircraft Company, one of the main Chinese aircraft manufacturers. This past September, AVIC I selected Evac potable water and vacuum waste systems for installation in all of its ARJ21 aircraft, the first regional jet to be developed by China. V-Mark also assisted Evac in winning business with Air China and China Southwest Airlines.

“I truly appreciate the assistance from the U.S. Commercial Service, as V-Mark has turned out to be one of our top representatives,” says Fuhrmann. “Although we already had a considerable amount of business in Hong Kong, V-Mark has helped us expand our business in China. A year ago China was a dream; now we are there for the long term.” ■



U.S. Commercial Service in Hong Kong

YOUR GATEWAY TO ASIA

Although Hong Kong has a population of only 7 million, it serves as a regional hub and a gateway for small and medium-sized U.S. businesses looking to enter the Chinese market, according to Barry Friedman, senior commercial officer in Hong Kong.

“Hong Kong people speak the language of the mainland and share the same culture,” Friedman says. “But they also have a business and legal system that’s just like ours. For a company like Evac Environmental Solutions, operating from a base in Hong Kong makes the most sense.”

The Commercial Service in Hong Kong offers a number of services to U.S. companies, including providing market information, finding agents and distributors, and arranging business appointments. For more information about opportunities in Hong Kong, contact your local Export Assistance Center or visit www.buyusa.gov/hongkong/en.

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